

Subject: Comments on proposed STIP
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Date: Thu, 29 Dec 2005 08:05:56 -0900
To: planning_comments@dot.state.ak.us

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December 29, 2005

To whom it May Concern:

I would like to comment on two proposed projects in the STIP 06-08.

1. The proposed delay to purchase of new buses and refurbishing of existing. Ketchikan has seen a substantial increase in ridership of our mass transportation system, largely I presume due to increasing fuel costs. I would urge DOT to allocate monies in the 06-08 STIP for one new more fuel-efficient bus. The borough has decreased the service area in an effort to cut fuel costs, which in some instances has left residents stranded. Additionally I would like to request that DOT build additional "stations" for residents to await the arrival of buses.
2. I would like to request that phase 2 of the Tongass Avenue improvement project be completed as soon as possible, with consideration of water and sewer lines being replaced at the same time. It would serve the taxpayers well if these projects could be coordinated. As one who commented at length regarding this project in 1995 why is this project taking so long?
3. I continue to be vehemently opposed to the boondoggle Gravina Access bridge project. The STIP plan was submitted prior to "Katrina" which left the cost of steel 15% higher than originally estimated. Congressman Young's federal earmarked dollars are now of thing of the past. Some of the comments below are from the period of 2002 please incorporate them once again:

As stated by the Department of Transportation the purpose of the Gravina Access Project is to **improve** surface transportation between Revillagigedo Island and Gravina Island. The **need** for improving access is three-fold:

1. To improve the convenience and reliability of access to Ketchikan International Airport for passengers, airport tenants, emergency personnel and equipment, and shipment of freight.
2. To provide the Ketchikan Gateway Borough and its residents more reliable, efficient, convenient and cost-effective access for vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians to borough lands and other developable or recreation lands on Gravina Island in support of the
3. To promote environmentally sound planned long-term economic development on Gravina Island.

Improve: 1. "To use profitably or to good advantage 2. To raise to a better quality or condition; make better 3. To make more valuable by cultivation, construction, etc.

Need 1. Necessity or obligation created by some situation 2. A lack of something useful, required or desired 3. A condition in which there is a deficiency of something, or one requiring relief or supply

Given these definitions, I contend that the proposed project does not fulfill the objectives of this project.

1. The present airport access does not require any change as far as reliability and efficiency is concerned when dealing with medical evacuations. Transports from either north or south have at least a 2 hour arrival time allowing substantial opportunity to gather the ferry crew, emergency crew and equipment at any hour of the day. Traffic projections by trip source have been furnished; I would like DOT to address the projected travel time from various locales, including road conditions (i.e. Summer tourists downtown, and using a bridge in the wind, rain, and fog that dominate our weather) thus addressing efficiency. Addressing time is essential when taking transports into consideration. Imagine your family member who is being mechanically ventilated with multiple tubes inserted into various orifices. Transported, not just a short 5minute ferry ride from the hospital (0.77miles) but through town's 4 stop lights south, onto a bridge, overland then another bridge and proceeding to travel another several miles (9.33 total miles) down a road that is just as poorly maintained as Tongass Highway. As a health care professional that has dealt with transports in a variety of capacities over the last 25yrs I can attest to the fact that this will put undo stress on an already fragile situation. I vehemently disagree with the table provided in the July of 2000 report ADOT furnished.
2. The need to improve access for bicycles is ludicrous-how can one improve on something that does not exist? For years citizens of Ketchikan have petitioned DOT to improve or develop our bicycle capacity on Revillagigedo with little results. I am skeptical that we would have any better results with this project.

3. When expending federal dollars I believe that NEPA has to be taken into consideration. NEPA of 1969 Sec. 2 (42USC4321) states that the purpose of this Act are: To declare a national policy which will encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between man and his environment; to promote efforts which will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment and biosphere and stimulate the health and welfare of man; to enrich the understanding of the ecological systems and natural resources important to the Nation; and to establish a Council on Environmental Quality.

A. Please explain how building a bridge that proposes impacting over 86 acres of wetlands with 1,734,900 cubic meters of fill and seriously impacting essential fish habitat satisfies the intent of this Act?

B. Gravina's deer population sustains black bears and a wolf pack. The island is a popular hunting and trapping place for area residents. Over 96% of the Metlakatla and Saxman residents get food from Gravina, and the island's resources are vital to the communities' economic and cultural health. These practices are thousands of years old and need little encouragement with regards to "harmony between man and his environment."

I believe that there are specific statutory obligations to coordinate or consult with appropriate agencies. I would hope to see in the future EIS the reports and recommendations from different agencies such as the Department of Fish and Game, United States Coast Guard, Federal Aviation Administration and the Army Corps of Engineers to name a few. I trust that their concerns will be addressed and made public also. Specifically the recent Coast Guard's concerns regarding the Monte Carlo Simulation on cruise ship operations. It states F3 will force cruise ships to use the west channel which will result in a probability of a cruise ship grounding in 1 of 60 passages (add the State Marine Highway Administration to the above list). What are the environmental as well as economic implications of such a scenario? Hemming the port in with this cul-de-sac development is not in the long term best interests of Ketchikan.

4. I would like to see the cost-benefit study as required by the Federal Highway Administration. Along this line I would ask what the implications of F3 are for traffic fatalities and accidents since there will be a lot more driving. It is a long way to the airport via F3 (as I've already stated). Accidents will occur with the increase in driving. I would like to know how by how much and what the costs will be and what the projected increase in fatalities will be. These questions are supposed to be evaluated in federally funded highway projects and I would like them addressed.

4. I will agree that this bridge is being proposed as a matter of convenience. It is much more convenient to stay in one's vehicle in the pouring rain than to wrestle one's luggage up the car ramp. The majority of citizen's that I have surveyed think that the present system is adequate but fails to address our inclement weather situations. **I would like to propose a much less costly scenario. Baggage check -in on Revillagigedo side (Alaska Airlines responsible for some of the costs) and ferry service from its present location every 15minutes for the hour before and after flight arrival even during winter. I believe that would address the majority's concerns. One could check their luggage at least 2hours before flight departure and then have plenty of time to run any last minute errands. (Could we perhaps use some of the monies for the bridge for this worthwhile endeavor?)**

The document supplied does not give the public the understanding as to parking at the Airport. Where will it be built? How far from the terminal (addressing convenience and efficiency) After 9-11 there have been proposed increased security measures with specific recommendations as to parking areas away from susceptible areas. Please address this formally. I do not accept the verbal response that I received and that was that we would "probably" go back to the lax way we had done things. If a parking garage/area is to be located a significant distance from the terminal and a shuttle needed, the public needs to be aware of this especially since in the purpose and need is cost and convenience. Other than the military bases, the present location of the airport and system of arrival for embarking passengers and "greeters" is perhaps the most secured airport in the nation.

I would like to advocate for funding for an additional ferry in lieu of the bridge.

I thank you once again for your time and consideration of my comments.

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